

In Memory of
US Army Private First Class

Raymond G. Baumgardner

Lead, South Dakota
Lawrence County

December 28, 1927 – January 1, 1951
Killed in Action in Korea



Raymond Baumgardner (aka George Smith) was born December 28, 1927, at Belle Fourche, South Dakota. He was raised as an only child by Raymond and Dessie O. (Zerba) Baumgardner of Vale. He attended country schools and Vale High School, but also during the Depression he traveled with his parents as his father worked at CCC camps in the Hills area. He is remembered as on the tall side with sandy hair and a light complexion. It is believed that Raymond first entered the service at the end of WW II and that it wasn't until he entered the service that he had his name officially changed to Raymond Baumgardner, the name he had unofficially gone by his whole life. When he was discharged the first time, he worked for Homestake Mining Company in Lead. His mother, Dessie, widowed in 1945, stayed with him in Deadwood and kept house for him.

Raymond reenlisted in the Army, had his physical in Sioux Falls, and on October 3, 1950, he entered active service. Since he had already served in WW II, his training was brief. Pfc. Baumgardner was sent overseas from Fort Lewis, Washington, on November 15, 1950, as part of Company L, 19th Infantry, 24th Infantry Division. His mother received a letter from him, written on Christmas Day, which said he "was going toward the front."

Private First Class Raymond Baumgardner was killed in action on January 1, 1951, in Korea. His mother first received notice that he was missing in action. His body was later returned to the United States, and he was buried with military honors at Black Hills National Cemetery near Sturgis on February 16, 1954.

His mother, Dessie, lived in Belle Fourche for the rest of her life and was strengthened and comforted by her church family there.

Raymond was awarded the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

This entry was respectfully submitted by Sheila Hansen, teacher/librarian at Spearfish Middle School, Spearfish, SD, July 20, 2004. Information for this entry was provided by the South Dakota National Guard Museum, an application for a SD veteran's bonus, and Elizabeth Pauley, Vale, niece of Dessie Baumgardner. Memorial stone photo by Mrs. Hansen. Profile approved by Beth Pauley.